

Tunisia's submission on REDD+ non-carbon benefits

Tunisia is hereby submitting its views in response to the call for submissions made at SBSTA 38 regarding REDD+ non carbon benefits, in particular on methodological issues identified by Decision 1/CP.18, paragraph 40, in view of their consideration at the SBSTA 40 meeting to be held in June 2014.

Tunisia is engaged to contribute to an effective implementation of the UNFCCC and therefore to global efforts to fight against climate change, in mobilizing all possible instruments, including REDD+. As a low emitting country but increasingly vulnerable to the negative effects of climate change, Tunisia is willing to promote, on a voluntary basis, the essential role that its forests play for both climate change mitigation and adaptation in the context of the current international climate regime, and to prepare for the post-2020 regime.

Aware of the specific characteristics of Mediterranean forest ecosystems, Tunisia is involved in a regional process of dialogue and experiences' sharing on integrated management of Mediterranean forest ecosystems. Together with its partners in the region, Tunisia has approved on 21 March 2013 the *Tlemcen Ministerial Declaration* (www.iii-med.forestweek.org/sites/default/files/press/tlemcendeclaration21032013_eng.pdf), which recommends to promote goods and services provided by Mediterranean forest ecosystems, notably in « *adapting and strengthening available financing mechanisms, and through innovative financing mechanisms which can support the implementation of policies and programmes* » that are necessary to ensure a sound management of forest ecosystems and other wooded lands in the Mediterranean region, including the REDD+ mechanism established under the auspices of the UNFCCC.

In a context of a fast growing demographic pace and of high population density in forest ecosystems (100 inhabitants/km², which is about twice the national average), and in order to promote forest sustainable management, the Tunisian forest administration pays a particular attention to the multi-functionality of Mediterranean forest ecosystems. Those are in fact carbon sinks which should be maintained, strengthened, and also adapted. They provide goods and services, such as wood, wood energy, cork, feed, food, aromatic and medicinal plants, or entertainment areas, which respond to essential needs of the population and support income generating activities. From this perspective, forest ecosystems contribute significantly to the economic and social development of Tunisia through the improvement of livelihoods and poverty eradication of the forest villagers (who represent from 8% to 10% of Tunisian population and nearly 23% of the rural population, considered as the poorest population of the country¹).

According to the first elements of the forthcoming Fifth Assessment Report of the IPCC, and looking at the *State of Mediterranean Forests Report 2013* (www.fao.org/docrep/017/i3226e/i3226e.pdf), it is clear that the Mediterranean region is one of the regions that will be the most impacted by climate change. Such adverse impacts include an increase of forest fire risks or extreme and recurring weather events. Despite their vulnerability, Mediterranean forests, especially from the South border of the Mediterranean Sea, are playing a key

¹ Etude sur la caractérisation de la population forestière en Tunisie. DGF, FAO et GIZ 2012.

role for adaptation to climate change. In effect, they contribute notably to the fight against desertification and erosion.

The REDD+ strategic options envisaged by Tunisia in the framework of its sustainable forest ecosystems' management policy show the possibility to generate a number of environmental, social, economic, and governance related benefits. With the view to maximizing and rationalizing support to REDD+ activities towards an integrated approach of the fight against climate change, it seems necessary to support those co-benefits which guarantee the achievement of positive results in terms of mitigation and carbon stock permanence in the long term while creating synergies between mitigation and adaptation measures.

This is particularly the case in the Mediterranean region, in a context of an important demographic pressure on forests (30% of the income of forest villagers is provided by the forest sector through working days and harvesting of several forest products) and an increased vulnerability of forest populations to the adverse impacts of climate change:

- (1) Tunisia's strategic REDD+ options take into consideration future adverse impacts of climate change on the country forestry ecosystems, for instance through the development of early warning systems and the adaptation of forestry management practices to increased risks of forest fires, pest infections, extreme weather events, etc.
- (2) In addition, Tunisia's strategic REDD+ options target the fight against desertification and soil erosion, the improvement of the overall water lifecycle in a context of increased resource scarcity (less than 500 m³/inhabitant/year)², and the conservation of an important inter and intra-specific genetic diversity (which is indeed necessary for country adaptation capacity in the future). As such, the REDD+ options can limit the negative impacts of climate change on populations, landscapes and infrastructures.

The mitigation potential of Mediterranean forests should not be neglected by the UNFCCC; it should be strengthened instead, including through the REDD+ mechanism. Given their specificities, it is crucial to provide an incentive in the framework of UNFCCC implementation to support co-benefits which can maintain carbon results achieved through REDD+ activities in the long term, in particular those supporting adaptation of forestry ecosystems to climate change.

At this stage of discussions among Parties, Tunisia strongly supports the need for incentive which can valorise non-carbon benefits in the framework of REDD+, and in a consistent manner with the decision the COP recently adopted in Warsaw (paragraph 22 of Decision 9/CP.19), which recognizes the importance of such incentive. Such incentive may take different forms of implementation while taking account of national REDD+ priorities, national circumstances and countries' respective capacities, and it shall be provided through additional, sufficient, predictable and sustainable resources coming from a variety of sources.

² The Strategic Study *Water 2050 in Tunisia*, Ministry of Agriculture, 2012 (Etude Stratégique Eau 2050 en Tunisie, Ministère de l'Agriculture 2012).

Sustainable Management of Water Resources, Ministry of Environment and Sustainable Development and GTZ, 2008 (Gestion Durable des Ressources en Eau, Ministère de l'Environnement et du Développement Durable et GTZ 2008).

In order to provide for an incentive, which is adequate with regard to the carbon and non-carbon results expected in the UNFCCC framework, Parties should agree on a methodological framework to measure and verify non carbon benefits and their role in maintaining carbon benefits. Notably, principles for their assessment together with indicators could be elaborated and used for these purposes. Reference should be made to existing principles and indicators on adaptation already elaborated within the UNFCCC framework or under other international forums or mechanisms, if they are relevant to measure non-carbon benefits in forest ecosystems (for example for the measurement of soil and landscape quality, water resource state, or biodiversity conservation). Such international principles and indicators may be complemented by national indicators, in order to measure accurately non carbon benefits. Measuring non-carbon benefits requires an efficient institutional and organisational framework based on a sound management and effective monitoring of forest ecosystems. In this regard, Tunisia would like to stress that it has been developing decennial forest strategies since the 1990's towards sustainable forest management policies, in a way that is adapted to its national context, by targeting forest ecosystems conservation and reconstitution and promoting at an early stage the reduction of deforestation and forest degradation.

Tunisia's forest administration, in charge of forest management, has proved its strong capacity of measuring and monitoring non-carbon benefits. In effect, Tunisia has carried out two forest and pastoral inventories (for 1995 and 2010) and three Greenhouse Gases inventories (for 1994, 2000, and 2010), enabling the measurement, verification and reporting on REDD+ carbon and non carbon benefits on a transparent and accurate manner.

Tunisia acknowledges the COP19 Decision adopted in Warsaw relating to the work program on result based payments for REDD+, which constitutes an important step towards making REDD+ fully operational. However, a number of uncertainties remain as to how to determine exactly the amount of payments that will be made for the carbon results achieved through REDD+ activities.

As far as the incentive for non carbon benefits may be determined by taking into account modalities for making result-based payments and their levels, it is necessary that UNFCCC Parties further explore what the possible options are to set the incentive at an appropriate level and according to modalities which correspond to the requested needs.

Consequently, Tunisia proposes that Parties submit their views and express their expectations in relation to the way to measure non-carbon benefits and modalities to determine the form and the level of adequate incentives for their support in early September 2014, taking into account progress made at the meeting of SBSTA 40 in June 2014. In addition, in view of preparing a constructive discussion on these methodological issues at the Lima Conference, Tunisia proposes that the UNFCCC Secretariat arranges for a technical workshop on REDD+ non carbon benefits that could take place in the margins of SBSTA 41, where the importance of providing support to non carbon-benefits as a key mean to ensure the permanence of emission reductions and of the carbon stock in the long run under specific circumstances could be demonstrated, especially in Mediterranean forests.